

Gabriel Zimmerman

Gabriel “Gabe” Zimmerman led his life with joy and passion: for his family, his love, Kelly, for his friends, for the people he served in Southern Arizona, and for social justice.

A Tucson native, Gabe graduated from University High School. An avid soccer player, Gabe’s high school team twice took the state championship. After high school, he attended the University of California at Santa Cruz, where he was a proud “Banana Slug” and obtained a bachelor’s degree with honors in sociology.

He worked at Arizona’s Children Association, a facility for trouble youth. His passion for helping people led Gabe to continue his education and he received a Master’s Degree from the Tucson program of Arizona State University School of Social Work.

Gabe then was offered a chance to work for a member of congress. As Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords’ Director of Community Outreach, Gabe was the face and voice of the office, working with organizations throughout southern Arizona. Gabe also provided key assistance trying to navigate the federal government.

Congressional staffers often accept brutally long hours and scant thanks. But with those long hours comes great rewards. If someone had a problem with a mortgage foreclosure, with Medicare or Social Security or with veterans’ benefits, Gabe did everything to assist them. Congresswoman Giffords’ top responsibility is to help people she represents, and Gabe put actions to those ideals every day.

He was the congressional staffer that all staffers want to emulate. He was a dedicated public servant, fiercely loyal to the congresswoman and his colleagues and determined to make his community better.

Gabe was a connector, a teacher, a helper and an advocate for social justice. Gabe’s joy and passion was evident in every aspect of his life-not just in his work, but in his personal life. He was deeply in love with his fiancée, Kelly. In his personal time, he liked learning about history and current events and playing the game “Civilization.” He was a natural athlete, enjoyed hiking and running in the beautiful Sonoran Desert and traveling the world with his mother and brother.

He was passionate about doing the right thing, no matter how big or small. He served on the boards of the YWCA, attracted to its message of anti-racism and social justice; of Child and Family Services and the Comstock Foundation, caring about the needs of young people; and of PACE, continuing his commitment to social work.

His family is very proud that he worked for Congresswoman Giffords and served the community in many ways and is grateful that when he left us, he was doing what he loved. They are also thankful for 30 years with such a fine man who was full of joy, committed to justice and who cared about ideas and people.

Let us remember to love and cherish one another and strive in Gabe’s memory to live life to the fullest. Perhaps then, we will see the better place for which our friend, brother, and son sacrificed so much.

Gabe is survived by his mother, Emily Nottingham, father Ross Zimmerman, step-mother Pamela Golden, brother Ben Zimmerman, and many loving friends and relatives.